

Nathan Seamans House
15 Arnold Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-186

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
86-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

NATHAN SEAMANS HOUSE

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Address: 15 Arnold Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.

Plat 16, lot 298

Present Owner Mr. and Mrs. Bradford F. Swan
and Occupant:

Present Use: Dwelling

Brief Statement This is a typical, late eighteenth century frame
of Significance: house, two stories high with a center chimney.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1792 Christopher Arnold sells to Nathan Seamans, distiller, for \$150 a certain lot of land easterly of Benefit Street on the N side of Arnold Street "being lot #6 in plat division belonging to my late father Christopher Arnold. Bounded S by Arnold Street; E by James Arnold Esq; W on land of Sarah Godfrey; N by heirs of Joshua Ashton deceased." - Deed Book 23, page 168, in Providence City Hall.
- 1797 WILL--of Nathan Seamans: "I give and bequeath to my affectionate wife Sally Seamans all my Estate both real and personal during her natural life and after her decease to my 2 children James and Sally India Seamans." - Wills Book 7, page 883, in Providence City Hall.
- 1798 CHACE places Nathan Seamans House here - Notes at the Rhode Island Historical Society gathered by Henry R. Chace in preparation of his book, Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798, Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914).
- 1814 Mss. tax descriptions in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, for the 1814 Providence direct tax to the federal government heirs of Nathan Seamans; S by Arnold Street 45', continuing back

77' with a 2-story DWELLING HOUSE built in 1792...
32'x28'. (signed) Sarah Simmons and Nathan

- 1846 Nathan Tillinghast sells the property to Louis Leveck "being the Estate of Sally (Seamans) Tillinghast "of which she died seized and of which her father Nathan Seamans jr died seized and possessed. - Deed Book 102, page 47, in Providence City Hall.
- 1885 Heirs of Louis Leveck sell the property to Sarah F Durfee, wife of Charles "being the same lot formerly owned by Nathan Seamans and more recently by Louis Leveck. - Deed Book 333, page 107, in Providence City Hall. Owned by Durfees until
- 1932 Commissioner, Samuel Temkin sells this property to John Thayer Company for \$5,250. - Deed Book 761, page 408, in Providence City Hall.
- 1950 John Thayer Company sells to Bradford Swan "that certain parcel of land with all buildings, for \$8000. Bounded: S by Arnold St 46.4' E by W N Pournaras 76.4'; N by Theodore F Green and Hester Hastings 44.9'; W by Antonio J Baptista 75.9'. - Deed Book 897, page 198, in Providence City Hall.

Occupants of #15 Arnold Street, from the Providence Directory:

- 1824 Mrs. Sarah Seamans (Simmons)
1844 Albert Greene, clerk
Louis Leveck, jeweller
1847 Same as 1844
1866 Edward Leveck, carriage-maker
Sarah Stebbins, widow
Fanny Stebbins, teacher

2. Date of erection: Between 1792 and 1798.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The house is largely unaltered, although the mantel in the parlor (southeast room on first floor) appears to have been changed as indicated in the description.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
December 1961.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a typical, late eighteenth century frame house, two stories high with a center chimney plan, preserving many characteristic details including a steep winding stairway against the chimney in the small front hall.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Rectangular main block, 32' (five bays) x 28'. two stories, facing south, two-story rear wing to northeast.
2. Foundations: Random coursed ashlar.
3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame exposed on interior, plank walls, clapboards with graduated exposure, wider toward top, corner boards with beaded edge.
4. Stoops: Wood entrance stoop, three steps.
5. Chimneys: One large brick center chimney.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance, six-panel door, Ionic frontispiece, semicircular top light with wood muntins, fluted pilasters, pediment, modillion cornice. Paneled, top lighted rear doors, simple frames.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows, unrelieved window frames, large splayed wood lintels on first floor with keystone blocks, molded lintels on second floor continuous with cornice bed mold. No shutters.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape and covering: Gable, shingle.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Molded cornice, returned slightly at the eaves.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Center chimney, five-room plan, with kitchen in rear wing.
2. Stairway: Apparently original, U-shape, open well stairway in entrance hall, closed string with molded outside stringer, winders, large molded handrail, turned balusters and newel, turned pendants.
3. Floors: Original board floors, average 5" - 8" in width. Some later strip flooring.
4. Ceiling and wall finish: Plaster, papered.
5. Doorways and doors: Front rooms, six-panel doors, double, molded, mitered architraves. Elsewhere four-panel doors, single molded architraves.
6. Trim: Window frames similar to doorways. Denticulated molded ceiling cornices in southeast parlor, and second floor bedrooms. Beaded corner posts.
7. Hardware: Miscellaneous later knobs and latches, butt hinges.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Modern central heating. Southeast and southwest bedrooms on second floor have original one-story wood mantels with crosseted, molded fireplace surrounds, and molded mantel shelves. Mantel in parlor (southeast room on first floor) has apparently been altered: details are out of alignment, the overmantel is plaster, the fireplace opening has been cut down in height, and is surrounded by Liverpool tiles depicting Aesop's Fables which are good tiles, but it is unlikely that they would have been used originally in this house.

- D. Site: General setting; house at sidewalk line, level lot, narrow sideyards, rear yard, residential neighborhood.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
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December 1961